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ABSTRACT

The modernization of American education has beer retarded by the assumptions that (1) educational effectiveness is directly proportional to expenditures, (2) a 25:1 student-teacher ratio is most effective for learning, (3) that which is taught is learned, (4) learning occurs only inside a school, (5) learning proceeds in neat subject matter packages, and that (6) books and lectures are the only instructional media. The financial crisis has created a need to examine these assumptions, and the investigation has produced discernible trends toward educational reform, such as greater recognition of the student as an individual, increased reliance on the whole range of community facilities, better management and planning at all levels of education, and revised procedures for educational financing. (Author/RA)

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EDUCATION IN THE SEVENTIES

An Address given at the 84th Annual Meeting of
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by

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"Knowledge has to be improved, challenged and increased constantly, or it vanishes." So says Peter Drucker. He adds that we are applying to the education of future Americans techniques appropriate to training yesterday's assembly-line worker. I agree.

Even with all the heated verbiage to the contrary, the primary reason education remains antiquated is not lack of money. During the sixties our schools asked for, and got, tremendous increases in local, state and federal support of education at all levels. From 1963 to 1968 more federal legislation on education was passed, and more money appropriated, than in the entire previous history of this country. During the sixties the schools' income rose faster than the GNP.

This expansion was necessary to meet the demand and to develop our educational institutions as valuable national resources. At least that was our hope. But something went drastically wrong. What did?

In spite of all the money, our schools and colleges have not kept up with our changing society. Indeed, during this decade of affluence, they slipped from first to second place as a major educational enterprise. Television is now number one. By the time the average American student completes high school today, he has spent only 11,000 hours in school, and 15,000 -- 4,000 hours more -- in front of the television set! Obviously, educational institutions are now the Avis and not the Hertz in the total educational enterprise. They already need to try harder -- much harder!

In my view, the major reason education is not more effective today is that the basic assumptions on which our system developed are no longer valid. Let's examine just a few of them.

1. That more money for education is bound to make it more effective.

In spite of all this support I just mentioned, education's greatest decade of affluence has been a turbulent one.

Students rebelled and rioted, demanding a more relevant education. Parents protested. Teachers struck. School boards and trustees became anxious and fearful. Administrators became frustrated. More and more citizens called for greater productivity and accountability in education. And, rightly so.

What happened? By forcefeeding the system without making any basic changes, we merely magnified antiquated practices without improving the system. Worse still, we sold the taxpayer on the idea that higher taxes and increased tuition would by themselves make a more perfect educational world. But research reveals no automatic relationship between money spent on schools and students' achievement as measured by tests. This failure to improve created a new problem. It sparked a serious public confidence crisis that educators will have to work harder to overcome.

Some of the present dissatisfaction obviously stems from rising expectations, and as such is part and parcel of progress. The major

overall difficulty, however, comes from what an educator years ago called the "hardening of the concepts" in education, the failure of schools and colleges to recognize and make use of new and better ideas. More and more money for education did not cure it of this disease.

In other areas of living we demand and get annually new models in, for example, autos, clothes, and home appliances. But our schools remain virtually unchanged. Nothing tells better how we failed to change than a recent newspaper story about a gentleman named George M. Day. At the age of 85 he enrolled for a freshman history course at Ohio's Lorain Community College, in the laudable belief that one is never too old to learn. Mr. Day told reporters that the classroom hadn't changed much since he finished high school in 1903.

Obviously more money without new ideas merely results in more and more of the same without making it better.

2. Another rigid assumption is that a teacher-pupil ratio of 1 to 25 or less yields the most effective learning conditions for students.

This 1:25 ratio we regard as of overriding importance. Everything depends on it. It determines how we construct our school and college buildings and, therefore, our capital costs. It fosters what Harold Gores calls "egg-crate" schools. Furthermore it fixes the number of teachers we hire and therefore the operating costs. Buildings, teachers and staff together determine the maintenance costs.

A premise so critical to an enterprise should certainly be based on proof as to its effectiveness. Not so. Fifty years of educational research provides no evidence that when children are assembled in groups of 25 they learn most.

Where, then, does this notion come from? Who says so? As far as I can determine the ratio was first recorded in the Babylonian Talmud in the third century! The exact quotation translates as follows: "Twenty-five students are to be enrolled in one class. If there are 25 to 40, an assistant must be obtained. Above 40, two teachers are engaged." Written in the third century, this no doubt reflected practices of previous centuries. Education is basically a process of communication, and at that time virtually the only means of communications was by word of mouth. Think of the modern means of communications this ratio leaves untapped!

Is there any other area of American life on which so much depends that is based on a third-century man-made formula? For some years I have searched for an answer but have found none.

3. We furthermore assume that what is taught is learned; that there is a one-to-one relationship between teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are vastly different. To see how wrong this assumption is, all we need to do is look at the examination results of a class of students, all of whom have studied with the same teacher for a year. The students differ greatly in achievement. In spite of a lot of lip service, our schools

continue to ignore what is generally known today about motivation, differences in learning style and pace, and incentives. These are vastly more important than a teacher-pupil ratio or the size of a class. Nevertheless, teachers continue to think in terms of classes, not individual students.

To learn effectively, students must be inspired by their teachers so that they feel indispensable to the learning process, that only they can learn for themselves, no one else can learn for them. And the size of the class has nothing whatever to do with providing this type of inspiration!

I've often thought that the best teacher is the athletic coach. His goals are clear. He cares not about the age of the student or the grade he is in. The coach is concerned with performance and promise of development. Significantly athletic departments use innovations such as film and videotape far more extensively than others. Even high schools now often have videotape cameras and instant-replay stop-action equipment to help athletes do better.

4. A corollary of the false assumption that teaching willy-nilly results in learning is: <u>What is learned independently of the classroom, laboratory and library deserves no academic recognition or credit.</u> We therefore evaluate the results of our educational system by the number of years of schooling, rather than by real achievement. We say, "He or she is a high school graduate, or a college graduate." What does

this mean in terms of actual accomplishment? The answer is nothing. I fear that the trend to keep students in school longer and longer has more to do with our concern about glutting the labor market than with education.

As adults, we learn throughout life. So, too, the student learns much on his own, outside the schools. And yet, our schools proceed for the most part on the basis that independent study and work experience do not really count for much, that real learning must be guided by a teacher. On the contrary, learning how to learn by oneself should be probably the most important objective of the school.

5. Another false assumption is the idea that real life-long learning comes in neat subject-matter packages -- English, history, science. Unfortunately, students' real interests simply do not fit into such arbitrary academic classifications. Yet schools and colleges cling to disciplinary divisions. Our graduate schools, set up to train scholars in the investigation of narrow fields of knowledge, continue to turn out teachers who proceed to force their undergraduate students through the same experience. Seldom in life do we solve our problems through a particular academic discipline.

Given this subject matter approach, it is little wonder that schools have a hard time making what they do "relevant" to the lives of students, and to the problems of the community. Nor is it surprising that we now face the danger of a compartmentalized society, in which technology advances by its own momentum, ungoverned by human values.

6. Another false assumption causing educational stagnation is that real worthwhile learning comes principally by word of mouth from teacher to pupil, through textbooks or school laboratories. I am well aware of the mass of communications equipment that educational institutions have purchased in the name of progress. When the Academy for Educational Development conducted a nationwide study for the United States Commission on Instructional Technology -- which is, incidentally, the most comprehensive study and evaluation of instructional technology -- we actually found many millions of dollars' worth of language laboratories, television sets and systems, film and slide projectors, and other so-called "audio-visual aids."

But this equipment was not being used well, certainly not enough to justify its cost. Much of it was broken, too complicated for the teacher to operate, restricted by administrative red tape -- in short, anything but central to the learning process. Our rigid system was incapable of adapting to the tremendous potential of these means of communication. And so schools continue to show films and slides mostly as entertainment, a fill-in when the teacher wants to rest and not as an essential part of the educational process.

An example of what can happen when communications technology is well used in education comes from the small country of El Salvador. In a project with which the Academy is associated, the United States Agency for International Development has supported the government's efforts to use television as an integral medium of instruction in the schools. Teachers were retrained for an entire year, the curriculum was recast, and new

texts written. The venture began on a small scale and included provisions for rigorous evaluation before being expanded. The test results to date are very encouraging.

Having challenged these assumptions, we now need to ask what can be done to bring our educational system up to date and make it a really vital force in the learning of every child.

Education during the 70's, I feel sure, will change more in a decade than at any time in our entire history. Unfortunately, not for the right reasons! As Superintendent Shedd from Philadelphia cried before a congressional committee: "The urban schools of this country are dying from financial strangulation." Obviously the money will not be available to conduct school as affluently as in the 60's. But they need not die. The schools and colleges now find themselves in much the same position as the rich families earlier in this century who could no longer maintain their large mansions. Indeed, one of the last of these was abandoned just a week or so ago in a nearby community after the owner, Mrs. Anna Dodge, died in 1970 at the age of 103. A relative commented: "It will probably be torn down. Who can afford to keep up a place like that? It's ridiculous." So, too, for financial reasons the schools will no longer be able to carry on the education of our youth in the very expensive small class manner or to transmit information by the least effective and most expensive method, that is by word of mouth. Ideas for improvement are needed, not just more money to perpetuate outgrown

and obsolete instructional practices.

What are some of the major changes that are bound to come? They can be projected from trends that are becoming more and more discernible. John Gardner made this point some time ago when he said:

"I'm convinced that 20 years from now we'll look back at our school system today and ask ourselves how we could have tolerated anything as primitive as education today. I think the pieces of an educational revolution are lying around unassembled, and I think we're going to put them together in the next few years."

My point is that we will be forced by financial necessity to put them together in the 70's. What changes are most likely to come?

One of the most important with sweeping implications for practice will be a far greater recognition of the student as an individual -- educationally, socially, and legally, and not just an average person in a group. We will put into practice what we have known for a long time, that regardless of how the school paces instruction, each student will learn at his own rate. We will therefore see much more flexible programs such as Upward Bound, ungraded schools, advanced placement, and work study. Students will be able to accelerate their progress through school and college or progress at a slower pace if that is their aptitude. Schools will begin to adopt some of the techniques of successful experimental programs -- such as the Job Corps and street academies -- which have

reached students classified by schools as "unteachable."

At the higher level, the College Entrance Examination Board already offers examinations to persons who wish to demonstrate their mastery of college-level subjects. The results of these exams are accepted for credit by over 500 colleges and universities. Recently the New York State Board of Regents adopted a new policy which permits students to seek credit for a course by passing an exam -- regardless of whether they are enrolled in that course or not. This is a major breakthrough in giving credit for learning in nonformal educational situations -- including correspondence study, independent reading and work experience.

On the legal side, there is little question that students -- even in elementary and secondary school -- will be accorded greater civil rights (and the responsibilities that go with them) vis a vis school authority. Lowering the minimum voting age to eighteen will have a tremendous impact.

Although I deplore much of the senseless student violence that the nation has been subjected to during the past years, I can at the same time sympathize with students who feel their rights are being denied. The student revolution is in this case not dissimilar from the violence that surrounded the early organization of labor in this country. Out of the present struggle will emerge a greater concern for student rights.

Another reason schools and colleges will grant students greater recognition as individuals is that their parents do, and whether or not

we like it, all of society does. Universities simply cannot enforce 19th century regulations concerning relations between the sexes, for example, when they receive no support from society at large. The move to co-educational dormitories is just one step in the process by which the university is renouncing an untenable responsibility for the "morals," if you will, of its students that are sanctioned by society.

Clearly students will be freer to learn and freer to live. In the process they will have more responsibility for their own learning and be subjected less to spoon feeding.

The second major trend in the seventies will be an increased reliance on, and coordination of, community facilities outside the classroom; in short, the whole community will be the school. Our cities are rich in educational resources. Schools and colleges are only one part. I refer to television, radio, preschool programs, adult programs, industrial training, hospitals, libraries, museums, art galleries, music halls, theaters, and churches. These are all educational facilities, too infrequently used as such in the past. They offer people, programs, and space -- all of which could be put to good use in a comprehensive educational program for citizens of all ages.

I would definitely include business and industry, not only because of the training programs they offer their employees, but because of their capacity, under the proper coordination with the schools, to provide more on-the-job experience. New federal legislation in the area of vocational

education will undoubtedly involve these organizations more closely in the future.

Unfortunately no city now has an overall design to coordinate these various entities. In recognition of the need, I propose that every urban center create a Metropolitan Regional Commission on Education, which would inventory all educational resources, prepare a master plan for their use, spark needed new developments, and spearhead community support -- support not only for the schools, but for all broadly construed community educational efforts.

The third major trend in the seventies will be a continuing pressure for better management and planning in education at all levels. In the current economic situation schools and colleges have no alternative but to learn how to do more with what they have. Public support of education is drying up. Today between two-thirds and three-fourths of all educational bond issues fail. Only a few years ago, over 80 percent passed.

In elementary and secondary schools, we will be hearing a lot about such innovations as performance contracts and accountability. These terms refer to the practice of schools contracting with profit-making educational firms who guarantee to increase student performance in certain skills, as measured by test scores. Payment is based on the degree to which the contractor lives up to the contract's specifications.

Recently a report was issued on such a contract for a school in

Gary, Indiana. It showed at the end of the first year of a four-year experiment that nearly 73 percent of the pupils at the Banneker Elementary School reached or exceeded the national norms in reading or math skills or both. A phenomenal result in one year, considering that a year earlier 75 percent of the children in this all-black school performed below national norms in reading and math.

Through such experiments schools are learring that they haven't been very precise in saying what they want to teach, or how to measure it. The educational suppliers are running up against teacher hostility and rigid school structures -- the same problems that kept the schools themselves from being more effective.

We will also see more school administrators in the seventies with management skills now commonplace in business and industry. The practice of selecting a school principal from among good teachers does not guarantee a dynamic administrator with the necessary abilities in fiscal planning, labor negotiations, government and community relations. Yet these skills are most needed to direct a large organization dependent upon the cooperation of more or less autonomous interest groups.

All this goes double for higher education. Economic and social developments of the past seven years have thrown even our best colleges and universities into a tailspin. When schools like Princeton and Columbia face large deficit operations, it is not surprising that a number of smaller schools have closed down altogether in the past two years and others are threatened.

Sidney Tickton, the Academy's executive vice-president and one of the country's leading educational economists, outlined the problems college management must face in the seventies:

- Inflation, of a kind we didn't have in the past.
- Unemployment, which has caused many parents to reconsider what they are willing to spend on their children's higher education.
- The dip in the stock market, which has seriously dampened the generosity of foundations and rich donors.
- A tight federal and state budget situation.
- The surplus of PhD's and highly trained engineers and scientists.

And to compound the problem, the internal structure of higher-education institutions has been badly shaken. The college president, historically the figure of authority on campus, has seen his power base eroded by powerful student and faculty groups, and by his reliance on government funds. The board of trustees, traditionally an assembly of wealthy and well-connected men and women, is unprepared for the difficult task of establishing institutional policy in a time of such turmoil. Alumni support, at one time encouraged by a winning football team, must now be much more actively sought.

Colleges must become more "management conscious." To help college presidents, the Academy has established a Management Division, under grants from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; John Olin, honorary

chairman of the Olin Corporation; and other donors. The Management Division conducts research on urgent management problems. More importantly it makes this information available through a series of mailings and seminars, and a planned information center. Our purpose is to help that college president who, when he can't stand the heat in the kitchen, is tempted to put his head in the oven.

The final trend of education in the seventies is a re-thinking of the ways we apportion support to education.

The California Supreme Court recently ruled that the local property tax as a basis for school support violated the Federal Constitution by not providing equal educational opportunity for all children. It pointed out that parents in a wealthy suburb are able to enjoy a lower tax rate and still spend more per pupil on education than a poor community, which must tax its residents more heavily and still not have as much money for education. In the words of the court, "the affluent districts can have their cake and eat it, too. They can provide a high quality education for their children while paying lower taxes. Poor districts, by contrast, have no cake at all."

Since almost all states follow this practice, the California ruling is bound to cause a re-examination of school support throughout the country, if the United States Supreme Court upholds it. Federal and state support will have to be increased. Urban education would be markedly affected by such change. Cities now spend about two-thirds of tax revenues on services,

and only one-third on education. Suburbs, by contrast,spend about two-thirds of their taxes on education.

In higher education we will have to coordinate the many separate programs of federal support, and relate them to state plans -- and institutional needs.

We must also decide how much we value private higher education. The expansion of public colleges has seriously threatened the future of private institutions, which cannot match tax-supported low tuitions. If we want to insure private higher education in this country, we will have to take steps to support it, as is now being done in New York State with the development of regional plans of coordination between public and private colleges.

I close with an innovation I think is one of the brightest spots in our educational future with a great chance of success. I say this because it unites the trends I've discussed today -- the student as an individual, the entire community as an educational resource, and the capability of modern communications to extend educational opportunity without a commensurate rise in costs.

It goes by various names -- external degree programs, off-campus learning, university without walls. In brief, it is a plan whereby the student pursues a program of study under the guidance of a faculty member, but not primarily in the classroom. His work may be a combination of on-the-job experience, independent reading, correspondence study, television, radio or cassette instruction, attendance of classes at various kinds of institutions,

and special projects. In some cases he need never appear on campus -- indeed in some programs there are no campuses.

Under this plan a student demonstrates his proficiency by a combination of examinations and personal evaluations. There are no rigid residence or time requirements. He can proceed at his own pace, according to his own schedule. Upon the successful completion of the examinations, he is awarded a college degree, fully equal to those earned by on-campus students.

Such a flexible program has many advantages. It recognizes that the student properly motivated must learn by himself. It permits a far greater use of educational resources. It lets adult students go to college without having to disrupt their lives unduly, and it is far less expensive than creating college campuses.

New York State, with the support of the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, has already established a noncampus college and is proceeding with plans to grant an external degree solely on the basis of examinations passed. The most ambitious operation of this kind, however, is something called the Open University in England, a multimillion-dollar, government-supported nationwide venture.

In this, its first year in operation, it enrolled 25,000 adults from 43,000 who applied, in first-year college-level courses. Through a combination of radio and television broadcasts, correspondence assignments, and occasional local seminars, students at home work towards a

full-fledged university degree. There are no entrance requirements; everyone has a chance to prove what he can do.

It is of course too early to tell how successful the Open University will be. I offer it here as an example of the magnitude of reform needed for our educational system to regain its vitality. We must plan new, major, large-scale patterns. We must ask not just for more of the same but for better education; otherwise our educational system will not meet future demands.